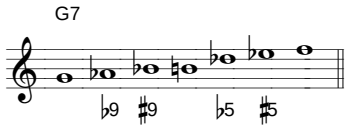
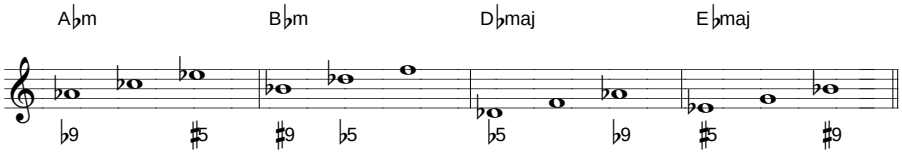
Chord-over-Chord Soloing

BY GARRISON FEWELL

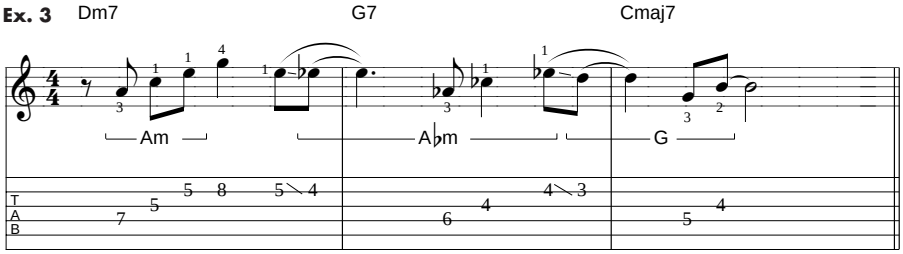
Ex. 1



Ex. 2



Ex. 3



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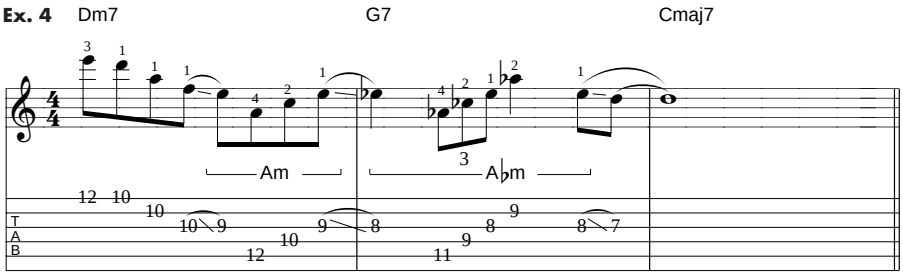

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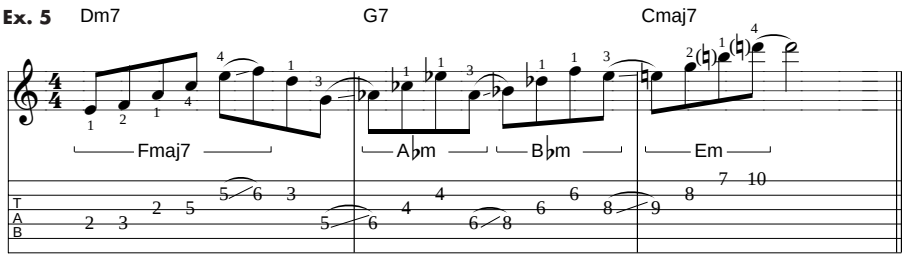
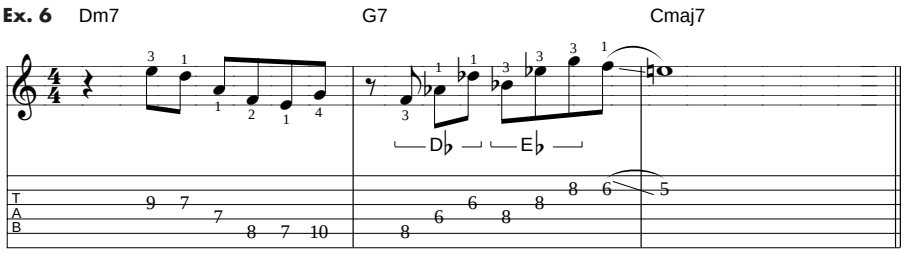


Ex. 6

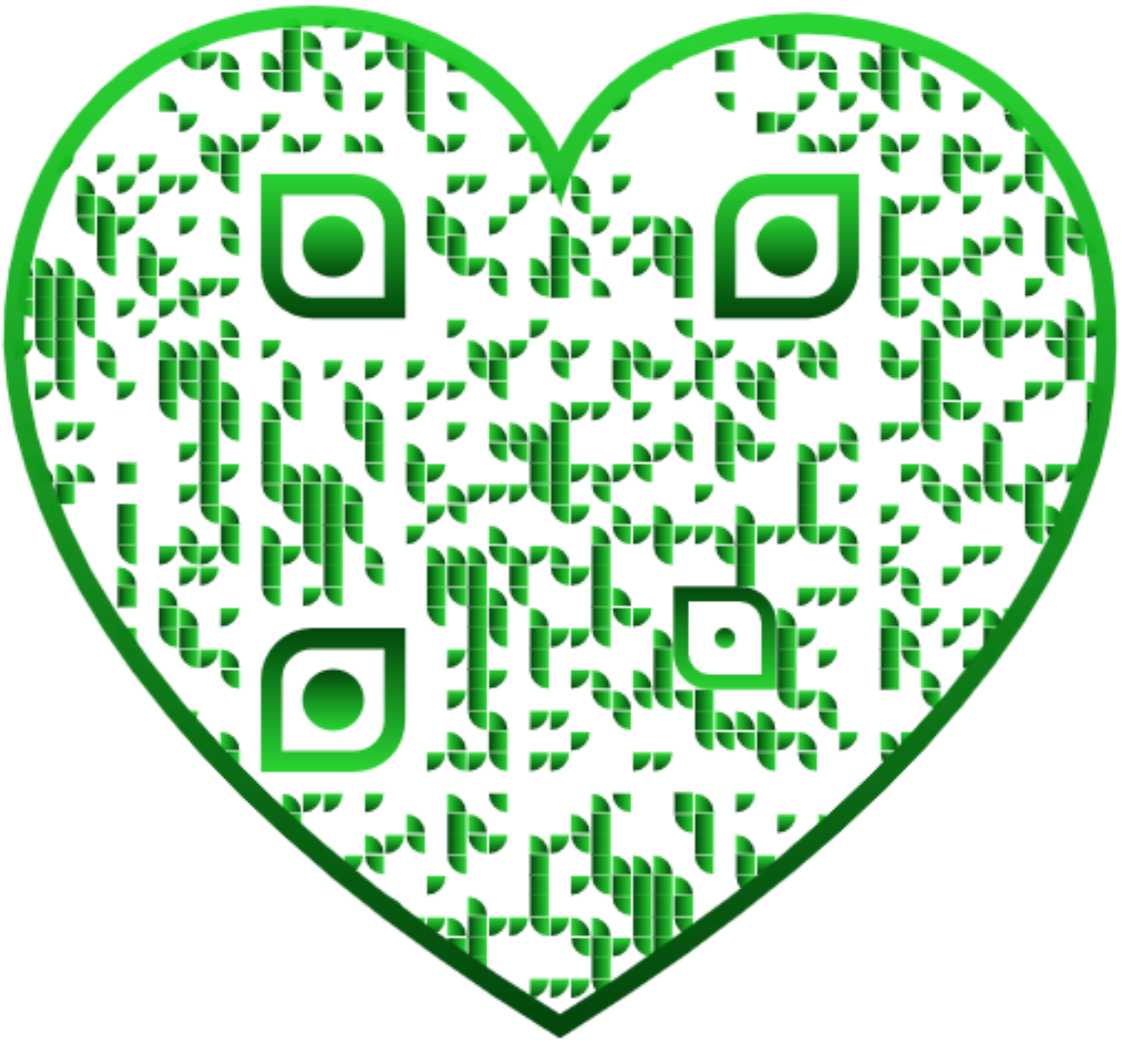


BORED WITH THE SAME OLD DIATONIC scales? Looking for new ways to play over changes? Here's a musical way to add ear-tweaking sounds to your improvisations.

Let's start with a dominant-7th chord, say *G7*. Instead of playing the usual *G* Mixolydian, try hot-rodding a *G7* arpeggio with a lowered and raised 9 and a lowered and raised 5, as in Ex. 1. (To make the next step clearer, the ♯9 and ♯5 are written as *B♭* and *E♭*—the enharmonic equivalents of *A♯* and *D♯*.) This yields a *G* altered-dominant scale, which sounds more outside than Mixolydian.

You can play a *G* altered dominant against *G7*, but there's a craftier option. The *G* altered-dominant scale comprises the same notes as an *A♭* melodic-minor scale played from its 7th tone—*G*. (See FYI: The Melodic-Minor/Altered-Dominant Connection for details.) A melodic and fretboard-friendly way to generate *G7* altered-dominant colors is to superimpose diatonic *A♭* melodic-minor triads over *G7*. Ex. 2 shows how *A♭m*, *B♭m*, *D♭* and *E♭* triads each feature two *G7* altered-dominant tones.

To fully appreciate the following examples, you'll need to hear the lines over the harmony. Take five and record a practice tape with a repeating IIm-V-I progression in *C*: *Dm7-G7-Cmaj7*.



Ex. 3's smooth line consists of three superimposed triads arpeggiated over the original chords. Check it out: Against *G7*, the V7, create altered-dominant notes by weaving through *A♭m*—the first triad of the *A♭* melodic-minor scale. Notice how the *A♭m* is sandwiched between *Am* and *G* triads, which respectively comprise the 5, 7 and 9 of *Dm7* and *Cmaj7*. There's a principle here: To produce extended color for IIm and I chords, play a triad of the same type a fifth higher.

In Ex. 4 again play *Am* and *A♭m* over *Dm7* and *G7*. For Ex. 5, drape *A♭m* and *B♭m* over *G7*, and try *Fmaj7* and *Em* against *Dm7* and *Cmaj7*. Play *D♭* and *E♭* triads against *G7* in Ex. 6.

Once your ear accepts these new sounds, you're ready to invent your own chord-over-chord melodies.

FYI

Fig. 1

altered-dominant formula:	1	♭9	♯9	3	♭5	♯5	♭7
G altered dominant:	G	A♭	B♭*	B	D♭	E♭*	F♮

*These notes are spelled enharmonically.

Fig. 2

melodic-minor formula:	1	2	♭3	4	5	6	7
A♭ melodic minor:	A♭	B♭	C♭	D♭	E♭	F♮	G♮

THE MELODIC-MINOR/ALTERED-DOMINANT CONNECTION

WHEN IMPROVISING OVER A dominant 7, jazzers often play a parallel altered-dominant scale containing the colorful ♭9, ♯9, ♭5 and ♯5 tensions. You'd tag *G7*, for example, with a *G* altered-dominant scale (Fig. 1).

There's another way to generate these altered-dominant notes. Over a dominant 7, some soloists prefer to work from a melodic-minor scale a half-step above the target chord. (In jazzspeak, the melodic-minor scale—sometimes called the jazz-minor scale—is simply a major scale with a lowered 3.) Against *G7*, they'd play an *A♭* melodic minor from *G*, its 7th degree (Fig. 2).

The resulting notes are the same either way. (When comparing scales, remember that *C♭* is enharmonically equivalent to *B*.)

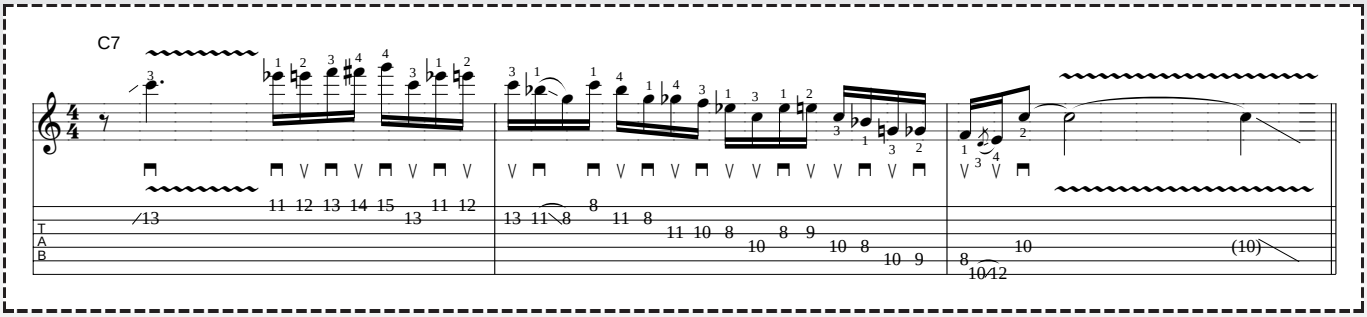
Why the alternative views? Facing down a dominant chord, many guitarists find it's easier to jump one fret higher and play a major scale with a lowered 3 than it is to apply four alterations to a dominant scale starting from the chord's root. The wily player learns both approaches.

—ANDY ELLIS

Lick of the Month

PASS THE HERB

PATRICK MEISTER OF INDIANAPOLIS NABS the cool T-shirt this month. "This blues/Mixolydian lick makes a funky ending to most any tune that ends on a dominant-7th chord," he says. "Joe Pass began 'Blues for Alican' and Herb Ellis ended 'Amazing Grace' with similar phrases. To make the line sparkle and flow, follow the picking indications. Play this fast and impress people!"



Send us your candidate for Lick of the Month (preferably notated *and* on cassette), along with a brief explanation of why it's cool and how to play it. If we select your offering, you'll get a funky custom T-shirt that's available *only* to Lick of the Month club members. Mail your entry to Lick of the Month, *Guitar Player*, 411 Borel Ave. #100, San Mateo, CA 94402. Include your name, address and phone number. Materials won't be returned, and please don't call the office to check the status of your submission. You'll get your shirt if your lick is chosen.